



Hon. Anna Bligh
Premier and the Minister for Arts
PO Box 15185
City East
Queensland 4002

29 September 2009

via email: premier@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Dear Premier,

Re: Halt Sand Mining on North Stradbroke Island (NSI): Increase the Protected Area Estate and Public Open Space

I have been directed by the State Council of Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland (Wildlife Queensland) to contact you regarding sand mining on North Stradbroke Island.

Wildlife Queensland is of the opinion that current sand mining practises on NSI are outdated and that the area should be protected for its environmental, social, cultural and economic values. Mining leases on the island were granted by the Bjolke-Petersen National Party during an era when Government and community attitudes towards the environment were very different. North Stradbroke Island (NSI) is the only sand island off the south-east Queensland coast not protected against sand mining. In the 1970s the Liberal/ National Party Government under Malcolm Fraser stopped sand mining on Fraser Island. Similarly, sand mining was stopped on Moreton Island, Cooloola and at Shelburne Bay in North Queensland, where the then ALP Government cancelled sand mining leases via an amendment by Parliament to the Mineral Resources Act. These Government actions recognised the immense value of protecting the environment from this destructive industry. As we have seen in all of these areas, there is much to be gained from the protection of NSI for future generations.

The current situation of expired mining leases presents a unique opportunity for your Government to put an end this destructive practise. It is our understanding that more than a dozen mining leases have expired, including leases currently being mined and, that applications to renew the expired leases are before your Government. Wildlife Queensland encourages you to halt sand mining on Stradbroke Island and protect the area as National Parks and Public Open Space. In the interim Wildlife Queensland advocates no renewed mining leases particularly leases numbered 1117, 1119 and 1120 (which are essential to the so-called "Enterprise" mine). These areas contain substantial tracts of old growth forests and woodlands which support a myriad of wildlife species. Refusing to renew these leases will see a significant outcome for the environment.

NSI is nationally recognised for its high biodiversity including rare and endangered species, RAMSAR protected wetlands, fresh water lakes, rainforest, old growth forests, woodlands and many ecologically significant vegetation communities. Currently mining takes place in a relatively confined area, however 70% of the Island is in the path of destructive mining interests much of which includes highly valued ecosystems which the public can not access. Many of the areas being mined are zoned 'conservation' under the Redlands Planning Scheme, which was approved and gazetted by the State Government in 2006. If your Government renews these expired mining leases it would be facilitating further destruction of zoned 'conservation' areas and demonstrate a complete disregard for the environment. By refusing to renew these mining leases and protecting these environments your Government has the ability to add to protected area estate at minimal cost. This would assist the Government to reach your promise to protect 50% more land for nature conservation and public recreation. NSI is the closest island to the major population centre of Greater Brisbane

which has an acute shortage of public open space this is recognised as an issue that needs to be addressed by the Government. SEQ has only 19% open space compared to Greater Sydney's 49%. The island should be protected in National Parks to ensure public access and the protection of the environment.

NSI has a genetically unique population of koalas. The continued destruction of woodlands for mining is a major threat to NSI's unique population of koalas. In SEQ we have seen the koala go from common to vulnerable and the results of the State Government 2009 Koala Coast Koala Survey showed a 51% decline in the population in less than three years and a 64% decline in 10 years. The Government has recognised habitat loss as the major threat to the koalas of SEQ and committed to addressing their decline.

The hydrological system that supports the life of NSI is complex and little understood. The long term consequences of sand mining on hydrology is often disregarded. Past mining has resulted in a homogenous landform which has very different hydrological characteristics. Currently policy states that mining companies replicate and rehabilitate mine sites once mining has ceased, however this is not always possible. Reforested areas may take hundreds or thousands of years to reach similar growth and complexity.

It is vital that Governments look at creating a stronger economy based on preserving our natural assets rather than destroying them. The ever-dwindling jobs of this mining industry can be replaced by permanent jobs for National Parks and low impact, well managed eco-tourism. For example, Tangalooma Resort (Moreton Island) employs 300-400 people, depending on the season, and has annual earnings in excess of \$20 million. If a similar authentic resort were to be established on NSI, it has the potential to replace all of the temporary jobs in mining with many more permanent jobs in eco-tourism. Wildlife Queensland is however cautious of the term 'eco-tourism' as it is quiet often misunderstood and misused. Wildlife Queensland would support tourism on NSI that has low environmental impact, is well managed and is nature based.

Wildlife Queensland understands there is an 11 year unresolved native title claim on parts of the Island. Wildlife Queensland advocates working with traditional owners to resolve this through the development of National Parks with co-management by government and traditional owners as has been done in the past throughout parts of the Northern Territory and Northern Queensland. Indigenous involvement in low impact eco-tourism would enhance employment opportunities for indigenous peoples and raise cultural awareness within the SEQ community. Engaging indigenous people in this process will help the Government achieve policy 7.1.2 and program 7.1.5 of the SEQ Regional Plan. Although Wildlife Queensland supports engaging traditional owners in land use decision making we are not in a position to speak for or on behalf of these people.

Wildlife Queensland and its supporters anticipate a decision from your Government that delivers the protection of the environmental, social, cultural and future economic values of this area. We look forward to your response so that we can inform our supports of the care that your Government has for the environment.

Yours Sincerely



Fiona Maxwell
Community Conservation Officer
Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland

cc Hon Stephen Robertson Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Trade
Hon Kate Jones Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability